

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 257 953

CE 041 584

AUTHOR Stebbing, M. Carolyn; And Others
TITLE Human Potential: A Study of Locus of Control, Sex Role Orientation, and Career Maturity.
PUB DATE Apr 85
NOTE 21p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (69th, Chicago, IL, April 1985).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Career Choice; *College Students; Differences; Females; Higher Education; Influences; *Locus of Control; Personality Traits; Predictor Variables; School Surveys; *Sex Role; *Sex Stereotypes; Student Attitudes; *Vocational Maturity

ABSTRACT

A study examined the effects of locus of control and sex role orientation on career maturity and also the correlation between level of career maturity and level of femininity. The study sample consisted of 61 undergraduate junior and senior women from a large southwestern university. Half of them were married, and their average length of work experience was three years. Each subject completed a test battery consisting of a personal attributes questionnaire, a career maturity inventory, an attitude scale, and an instrument designed to gather personal background information. Locus of control was shown to be the most valid predictor of career maturity. The relationship between career maturity and masculinity in this study was not statistically significant and thus did not appear to be a valid predictor. These results were taken to indicate that counselors attempting to aid women in developing their career potential should focus on encouraging more autonomous and assertive traits in female students. (MN)

* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *

ED257953

HUMAN POTENTIAL: A STUDY OF
LOCUS OF CONTROL, SEX ROLE ORIENTATION AND CAREER MATURITY

M. Carolyn Stebbing, University of Houston

John P. Gaa, University of Houston

Michael M. Omizo, University of Houston

Walter E. Cubberly, University of Houston

Howard L. Jones, University of Houston

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION
CENTER (ERIC)

- ☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
- ☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
- Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official NIE position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS
MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

M. Stebbing

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES
INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational
Research Association Chicago, April 1985

CE041584

Human Potential: A Study of Locus of Control,

Sex-Role Orientation and Career Maturity

Sex-role stereotypes, those commonly held beliefs about the differences between men and women, have long existed in our society (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Money & Tucker, 1975; Osipow, 1975; Wesley & Wesley, 1977). These stereotypes have tended to ascribe higher social value to the male characteristics and lower social value to the female characteristics (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz & Vogel, 1970; Kaplan & Bean, 1976; Mishler, 1975).

As women moved within American society, their needs for success and a sense of self were predominantly expressed through their social relationships (Frenza, 1982; Mishler, 1975). To express such needs in a manner contrary to the approved stereotypes of society increased the potential for negative responses from others. The social environment itself, therefore, tended to disapprove of women who sought self actualization through nontraditional avenues (Hartnett, Boden & Fuller, 1979; Mishler, 1975). Given this history of reinforcement, the women involved may have developed different attributions (locus of control) to the degree reinforcement was seen as the result of their own or other's behaviors (Rotter, 1966).

As the structure of society has been altered over the past fifty years, through the influences of international wars, political events and scientific advances, women found it easier to enter the world of work. Consequently, today, there are increasing numbers of women in the work force. There are also more numerous career opportunities and higher career expectations

for women. Much of the previous research on career issues, however, has been focused on the male population. Given these factors, it is important that the variables which may affect women's decisions, such as locus of control and sex-role orientation, be examined in relation to the impact they may have on women's career maturity.

The purpose of this study was to examine how career maturity is affected by locus of control and sex-role orientation. The study investigated the hypotheses that (1) there would be a significant relationship between career maturity and the level of locus of control orientation and (2) there would be a significant positive relationship between level of career maturity and level of masculinity. The study also examined the question of whether there would be a significant relationship between level of career maturity and level of femininity.

The field in which the female has been raised to function has a major influence on her later life decisions. One's sex-role orientation is defined as the degree of identification with one's gender as delineated by society (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Masters, Johnson, & Kolodny, 1982). One of the key issues of psycho-sexual socialization is the question of how society defines or delineates the differences between males and females.

In the area of sex-role orientation, popular literature on childrearing reflect the common views of males as doers and females as nurturers (Fraiber, 1959; Ginott, 1965). Many of these popular views were so ingrained in the American culture that the question of heredity as the determining factor was

simply assumed (Money & Tucker, 1975; Wesley & Wesley, 1977). Consequently, scientific inquiry into sex-role orientation has only recently been studied.

The present body of research on the actual differences of psychological functioning appear to indicate that boys excel in mathematical ability, girls have greater verbal ability, boys excel in visual-spatial ability in adolescence and adulthood but not in childhood and males are more aggressive (Maccoby & Jacklin, 1974; Wesley & Wesley, 1977). These differences, initially small, if reinforced by both the individual's preferences and the culture may lead females and males into more sex specific career and educational avenues (Wesley & Wesley, 1977).

Theorist and researchers have suggested that children obtain their sex-role behaviors by such means as observation (Slaby & Frey, 1976), role models (Baruch, 1976), and the resulting consequences or positive and negative effects that their actions produce. One of the consequences which appears to be part of the impact of sex-role stereotypes is the significant social desirability of the masculine stereotypical traits over the feminine stereotypical traits, even though women have been shown to incorporate the feminine stereotypical traits into their self-concepts (Rosenkrantz, Bee, Vogel, Broverman & Broverman, 1968). There are also indications that the very individuals one might seek for help, mental health professionals, also hold stereotypical views of men and women (Broverman, Broverman, Clarkson, Rosenkrantz & Vogel, 1970).

The locus of control construct has been examined in

connection with a variety of topics, such as cognition, achievement, anxiety, and adjustment (Lefcourt, 1976, 1981; Phares, 1976). In the majority of these studies the relationship between internal locus of control and a more effective outcome for the individual has been significant. The construct, locus of control, is defined as the perception of causal relationships which are seen as the result of luck, chance or powerful others (external) or the results of one's own behavior, skill or effort (internal) (Rotter, 1966). Thus, external locus of control orientation may act as a psychological barrier to women's occupational aspirations and participation. The women with internal locus of control orientations appear to alter their choices toward more traditional careers and plan to work for a shorter length of time (Burlin, 1983; Harrison, Guy & Luper, 1981; Kearney & Kearney, 1981). The degree to which one is or is not influenced by others in the area of decisions is of major importance in the ability to make effective, mature career decisions. Decision making skills are seen as central to the needs of women today (Frenza, 1982).

In his writings on career development, Donald Super (1953, 1957, 1960, 1963, 1964, 1974) states the idea that one aspect of career development is the implementation of self-concept into vocational self-concept. Thus, as he points out, individuals with poorly developed views of themselves will have more difficulty developing vocationally than those with better organized self-concepts. Two aspects of self-concept can be considered the individual's sex-role orientation and the locus of

control orientation, It is therefore, reasonable to infer that an individual's ability to develop a mature career path would be related to the self-concept items of sex-role orientation and locus of control. The body of research available on the variables which may influence women's career decisions is limited. The women studied in relation to their career attitudes appear to see themselves as feminine (Tangri, 1972). They appear to still maintain primary responsibility for childrearing even in dual-career families (Gaddy, Glass & Arnkoff, 1983). These women tend to choose the traditional careers of teaching, nursing, secretarial work and social work, Those who do aspire to or work in nontraditional career tend to be more internal in their locus of control orientation (Burlin, 1983; Harrison, Guy & Luper, 1981; Mareck & Frasch, 1977).

Methodology

The independent variables in this study were locus of control orientation and sex-role orientation. The dependent variable for the study was career maturity.

The subjects consisted of 61 undergraduate junior and senior women. These subjects were drawn from campus classes at a large southwestern university. Their ages ranged from 19 to 42. Slightly less than half of the sample (25) were married. The subjects' average length of work experience was 3 years. Their participation was solicited by the researcher.

A test packet containing three inventories and a personal data form was provided for each subject. The three instruments were the Personal Attributes Questionnaire (Spence et al., 1974), the Rotter I-E Scale (Rotter, 1966) and the Career Maturity

Inventory, Attitude Scale (Crites, 1978).

The Personal Attributes Questionnaire (PAQ) (Spence et al., 1974) was used as the sex-role identity measure. The PAQ is a self-report measure of sex-role identity consisting of 24 bipolar items. These items describe personal characteristics on which the subjects rated themselves using a five-point scale. The instrument is divided into three eight-item scales. These scales are labeled Masculinity, Femininity, and Masculinity-Femininity. The range of possible scores is from 0 to 32 for each scale (Spence & Helmreich, 1978).

The authors (Spence et al., 1978) have reported a correlation between the Bem Sex Role Inventory (BSRI) and the PAQ of .75 and .73 for males and females, respectively on the two M scales and .57 and .59 for males and females, respectively, on the two F scales. Reported correlation with social desirability (Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability) range between .08 and .36. The correlations between the full scale scores and the short form (Cronbach alpha) for a sample of students given both forms were .85, .82, and .78 for M, F, and M-F scales, respectively, indicating the short form scales to be satisfactorily reliable (Spence & Helmreich, 1978).

Several tools have been designed to measure the construct of locus of control (Anastasi, 1982). Of these, the scale devised by Rotter (1966) is one of the more extensively used tools for measuring a person's orientation toward internal or external locus of control. The instrument used by this research (Rotter I-E Scale) is a self-report forced-choice inventory. It consists

of 29 two choice items, alternately lettered a or b of which the subjects are to choose only one. The scores can range from 0 to 23. A low score on the instrument indicates an internal locus of control orientation while a high score indicates a more external orientation. Correlations are low with social desirability (-.12 to -.41). Its reported internal consistency (Kuder-Richardson) reliability coefficient is approximately .70, with similar (.72 & .78) results on a one month test retest reliability. Of the original sample of 575 males and 605 females from Ohio State University, the mean for males was 8.15 (SD=3.88) and the mean for females was 8.42 (SD=4.06).

The instrument used to measure the subject's career maturity was the Attitude Scale (Counseling Form B-1) of the Career Maturity Inventory (formerly the Vocational Development Inventory) by John Crites (1978). The instrument is a 75 item true-false self-report attitude measure. A correct response to the true-false statement indicates the more mature choice. The internal consistency coefficients for the subscales range from .5 to .72 (KR 20). Content validity was constructed by means of Flanagan's procedure for the initial item study and an 80% agreement by ten expert judges (5 female, 5 male). The criterion-related validity of the attitude scale has been related to several variables. A study of the relationship of decisiveness in career choice among 346 male college students has reported a biserial r of .25 (Carek, 1965).

Data was collected by the researcher in two group sessions of approximately 30 subjects. The test packets were distributed to each subject by the examiner. The instruments were alternated to

minimize position effects. No time limits were used. Instructions for the test administration consisted of the standardized instructions with each instrument to insure no contamination of the proceedings. Regression and correlation analyses were used to analyze the data relative to the two hypotheses and the research question

Results

In examining the results of the study relative to the first hypothesis (career maturity and locus of control, a correlation coefficient of $-.31$ ($p < .02$) was revealed. If one recalls from the discussion of the Rotter I-E Scale, the higher a subject's score, the more external the locus of control orientation. Thus the $-.31$ coefficient indicates an inverse relationship between the career maturity measure and locus of control orientation (the lower the score the more internal the locus of control). In examining the multiple regression results (see Table 2), locus of control was shown to be the most valid predictor ($p < .002$) of career maturity. Thus the first hypothesis was supported by the results of the research.

The second hypothesis stated that there would be significant positive relationship between level of career maturity and level of masculinity. This hypothesis was not supported. The relationship between career maturity and masculinity in this study was not significant ($r = -.008$, $p < .95$) nor was it a valid predictor (see Table 2).

Table 1

CORRELATION MATRIX AMONG AGE, LOCUS OF CONTROL, CAREER MATURITY,
AND THE PERSONALITY ATTRIBUTES SCALES (MASCULINE AND FEMININE)

(N = 61)

	IE	CMI	PAQ M	PAQ F	WORK	MARITAL STATUS
AGE	.15	.44	.20	.23	.73	.55
IE		-.31**	+.25	-.11	.08	-.02
CMI			-.008	-.25*	.44	.54
PAQ M				.38*	-.14	-.03
PAQ F					-.11	-.20

* Significant at the .05 level.

** Significant at the .01 level.

IE = Locus of Control

CMI = Career Maturity Inventory

PAQ = Personal Attributes Questionair

TABLE 2

MULTIPLE REGRESSION OF CAREER MATURITY, LOCUS OF CONTROL
MASCULINITY, FEMININITY

(N = 61)

Variable	Parameter Estimate	Standard Error	<u>T</u> Value
IE	-0.61	.19	-3.18**
Masculinity	0.22	.21	1.03
Femininity	-0.68	.25	-2.79**

df = 1

IE = Locus of Control

** Significant at .01 level

The research question which asked whether or not there would be a significant relationship between level of career maturity and level of femininity was answered in the affirmative. There was a significant inverse relationship between career maturity and level of femininity in this study. The correlation between femininity and career maturity was $-.25$ significant at the $.05$ level. Femininity was the second most valid predictor ($p < .007$) of career maturity in the multiple regression results (Table 2).

Discussion

This discussion will first look at the locus of control and career maturity relationship. The masculinity and femininity scores of the subjects and their career maturity will then be addressed.

As Rotter (1966) defined locus of control, it is logical to assume that internally oriented individuals would be more personally active in their career development. While an externally oriented individual might be more likely to be influenced by others or sit back and depend on luck rather than seek out an appropriate position. In keeping with this, the findings of this work tend to support the expectation that a stronger internal locus of control orientation would be found in individuals with a more mature attitude toward career development. Thus this study's results in the area of locus of control are in line with the growing body of research which link internal locus of control with maturity in career issues.

The locus of control issues directly impact women in a multitude of ways. Young women have been shown to be influenced

by parents and society in their career choices (Burlin, 1983). Those women with more internality report they plan to work longer than is reported by women with more external orientations (Marecek & Frasch, 1977). As Mary Frenza (1982) clearly points out, the women of today are in need of decision making skills. Yet if women are following the needs and feeling of others rather than their own, they are already functioning in a less mature manner. The unwillingness to act on decisions (an effect of external locus of control) can not move an individual toward a responsible approach to career decisions.

Also, since much of the research links internality with masculinity, one would assume that the more masculine a woman viewed herself, the more likely she would be assertive and competent. The correlation, however, for this group of 61 females between masculinity and career maturity was statistically insignificant. It was the negative correlation with femininity which was significantly related to career maturity. Thus for women in this study, perhaps it is not how masculine they view themselves which influences their career decisions. A key influence on career maturity may be the degree to which they do or do not incorporate an extreme stereotypical view of their femininity. It is possible that, despite the link between the masculine sub scale and internal locus of control (Kearney & Kearney, 1981), for a woman it may not be how masculine the individual views herself but how non stereotypically she perceives her femininity. In the earlier discussion of sex-role orientation it was pointed out the the traditional view of the

feminine woman has been as a wife/mother with her socially valued stereotypical characteristics described by Boverman et al. (1972) as a warmth and expressiveness cluster. It may be possible that women of today faced with the need to develop their career potential have not chosen to incorporate the masculine stereotypical traits. Perhaps these individuals have instead begun to redefine their concept of femininity. Women may not view themselves as particularly more independent or active (masculine traits), but as having less of the feminine traits of emotional, gentle or helpful. Thus it may well be that the work oriented woman of today do not see emotionality as an appropriate expression of femininity. They may be less prone to be helpful at the cost of their own career tasks. Also, perhaps it is neither gentle (feminine stereotypical trait) or rough (masculine stereotypical trait) but a midpoint of effective or assertive which they would use to describe themselves.

For the counselor, if the two variables in this research which resulted in a significant relationship with mature career attitudes (locus of control and femininity) are viewed together, it becomes apparant that there may be some similarity. For example, if one is gentle, able to devote oneself completely to others, emotional, or kind (feminine items), then there is an underlying quality of the external locus of control orientation. Others are highly significant in the life decisions of both the stereotypically feminine female and the individual with an external locus of control orientation. However, if one focuses on encouraging more autonomous and assertive traits, this may be of genuine benifit to counselors and other concerned individuals

attempting to aid women in developing their career potential.

Replication of the study with a larger and or more diverse subject population to reduce the effects of the small sample size and or the limited sample range is recommended. Further investigation of the relationship between career maturity and other variables such as self-concept, assertiveness, and decision-making skills is also recommended.

REFERENCES

- Anastasi, A. (1982). Psychological testing (5th Ed.). New York: Macmillan.
- Baruch, G. K. (1976). Girls who perceive themselves as competent: Some antecedents and correlates. Psychology of Women Quarterly, 1(1), 38-49.
- Broverman, I. K., Broverman, D. M., Clarkson, F. E., Rosenkrantz, P., & Vogel, S. R. (1970). Sex-role stereotypes and clinical judgments of mental health. Journal of Consulting Psychology, 34, 1-7.
- Broverman, I. K., Vogel, S., Broverman, D., Clarkson, F., & Rosenkrantz, P. (1972). Sex role stereotypes: A current appraisal. Journal of Social Issues, 28(2), 59-79.
- Burlin F. (1983). Locus of control and female occupational aspiration, Journal of Counseling Psychology. 30 (2), 188-193.
- Carek, R. (1965). The interrelations between social desirability, vocational maturity, vocational realism, and vocational decision. Unpublished master's thesis, University of Iowa.
- Crites, J. O. (1978). Career maturity inventory theory & research handbook Monterey, California: CTB/McGraw-Hill.
- Fraiberg, S. (1959). The magic years understanding and handling the problems of early childhood. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons.
- Frenza, M. (1982). Counseling women for life decisions. Ann Arbor Michigan: ERIC Clearing house on Counseling and Personnel Services. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 220 785).

- Gaddy, D., Glass, C. R., & Arnkoff, D. B. (1983). Career involvement of women in dual-career families: The influences of sex role identity. Journal of Counseling Psychology, 30(3), 388-394.
- Ginott, H. G. (1965). Between parent and child. New York: Avon Books.
- Harrison, B. G., Guy, R., & Lupfer, S. (1981). Locus of control and self-esteem as correlates of role orientation in traditional and nontraditional women. Sex Roles, 7, 1175-1187.
- Harnett, O., Baden, B., & Fuller, M. (Eds.). (1979). Sex-role stereotyping. New York: Tavistock.
- Kaplan, A., & Bean, J. (1979). Beyond sex-role stereotypes: readings toward a psychology of androgyny. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.
- Kearney, M. & Kearney, J. (1981). Sex-role orientation as a predictor of locus of control. George Washington University (ERIC document Reproduction Service No. ED 210 589)
- Lefcourt, H. (1976). Locus of control: Current trends in research and research. Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum.
- Lefcourt, H. (Ed.). (1981). Research with the locus of control construct. (Vol. 1). New York: Academic Press.
- Maccoby, E. E., & Jacklin, C. N. (1974). The psychology of sex differences. (Vols. 1 & 2). Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

- Marecek, J. & Frasch, C. (1977). Locus of control and college women's role expectations. Journal of Counseling Psychology 24, 132-136.
- Masters, W., Johnson, V., & Kolodny, R. (1982). Human sexuality. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.
- Mischler, S. A. (1975). Barriers to the career development of women. In S. H. Osipow (Ed.). Emerging women career analysis and outlooks. (117-146). Columbus, Ohio; Charles E. Merrell.
- Money, J., & Tucker, P. (1975). Sexual signatures. Boston: Little, Brown & Co.
- Osipow, S. H. (ED.). (1975). Emerging woman career analyses and outlooks. Columbus, Ohio: Charles E Merrell.
- Phares, E. J. (1976). Locus of control in personality. Morristown, New Jersey: Silver Burdett.
- Rosenkrantz, P. S., Vogel, S. R., Bee, H., Broverman, I. K. & Broverman, D. M. (1968). Sex-Role stereotypes and self-concepts in college students. Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology, 32, 287-295.
- Rotter, J. (1966). Generalized expectancies for internal versus external control of reinforcement, Psychological Monographs: General and Applied. 80, 1-28.
- Slaby, R., & Frey, K.S. (1976). Development of gender constancy and selective attention to same-sex models. Child Development 46, 894-856.

- Spence, J. T., Helmreich, R., & Stapp, J. (1974). The Personal Attributes Questionnaire: A measure of sex-role stereotypes and masculinity-femininity. JSAS Catalog of Selected Documents in Psychology, 4, 43
- Spence, J. T., & Helmreich, R. L. (1978). Masculinity & femininity. Austin: University of Texas Press.
- Super, D. E. (1953). A theory of vocational development. American Psychologist, 4, 185-190.
- Super, D. E. (1960). The critical ninth grade: Vocational choice or vocational exploration. Personnel and Guidance Journal 39, 106-109.
- Super, D. E. (1964). A developmental approach to vocational guidance: Recent theory and results. Vocational Guidance Quarterly, 13(1), 1-10.
- Super, D. E. (1963). Toward making self-concept theory operational In D.E. Super, R. Starishevsky, R. Matlin, & J. P. Jordan (Eds.). Career development: Self-concept theory (pp. 17-32). New York: CEEB Research Monograph 4.
- Super, D. E., Crites, J., Hummel, R., Moser, H., Overstreet, P., & Warnath, C. (1957). Vocational development: A framework for research. New York: Bureau of research, Teachers College Columbia University.
- Super, D. E. (1974). Measuring vocational maturity for counseling and evaluation. Washington, D.C.: American Personnel and Guidance Association.

Tangri, S. S. (1972). Determinants of occupational role innovation among college women. Journal of Social Issues, 28 177-198.

Wesley, C. & Wesley, F. (1977). Sex-role psychology. New York: Human Sciences Press.